



'This is a tale of friendship, and a story of togetherness': The British Monarchy, Grenfell Tower, and Inequalities in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London

Thursday 21 November 10am – 11am



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Location

Larry Saha Room

Haydon-Allen Building #22, Room 2175,
University Avenue, ANU

The fire at Grenfell Tower, a block of public housing flats in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London, in June 2017 has come to epitomise the growing divide between Britain's rich and poor in the last decade. Yet, the proximity of Kensington Palace, home of many senior British royals, has been almost entirely ignored in scholarship and commentary on the Grenfell Tower atrocity. This is especially remarkable given the philanthropic 'work' the monarchy has engaged in in the fire's aftermath. This paper explores *Together: Our Community Cookbook*, a cookbook released by the British monarchy as part of Meghan Markle's royal charitable 'duties', to raise money for The Hubb Community Kitchen - a group of women displaced in the fire, who prepared meals for their families and other survivors in the aftermath. The cookbook repeatedly emphasises unity, collectivity and togetherness: the importance of a local community response in The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to rehabilitate Grenfell survivors. This paper argues that in releasing the cookbook, the British monarchy itself is incorporated into this narrative of community and recovery, which fundamentally erases the inequalities in power and privilege between the monarchy and Grenfell survivors (and, indeed, those in similar socioeconomic positions). Likewise, *Together* overlooks the structural inequalities that underpinned the conditions at Grenfell, and instead individualises the survivors as 'responsibilized' neoliberal subjects. In so doing, this paper argues that the British monarchy is distanced from discourses of inequality and dis/advantage, and its position in the public imaginary is disguised and naturalised.

Dr Laura Clancy is an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow at Lancaster University, UK. Her research explores the cultural politics of the British monarchy, considering the role of the monarchy in producing consent for global inequalities and class power. You can follow her on Twitter: @Laura__Clancy.

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